



Greek Dance

For Lindos

The leaping cats of Lindos, loping leanly through my mind,
Act like the reflections of a play going on behind—
A puppet dance, daily pranced in this very old arena
By the eager tourist acting as his own manipulator.

A curious parody of cats engaged in scavenging,
The tourists, in the morning, intent on private hunting,
Find souvenirs and leather goods and other fineries
Spread out along the entire route, up to the Acropolis.

**At nine a.m. the endless trail upwards has begun—
A pursuit of experience relentless as the sun
That now, with its heat and light—a strange chemistry—
Starts a transmutation by an ancient alchemy:
The sacredness of the shrine—meaningless in this age—
Turns this casual sightseeing into a pilgrimage—
A religious experience for moderns out of practice,
Their ikons are the broken stones**

All through the afternoon, this homage still is paid,
While locals, in their villas, bask like lizards in the shade.
And, "How much further, Martha? I don't think I can go on."
But his feet still drag him upwards
while her souvenirs drag him down.

And on the beach the young ones take siestas in the sun
And wake up sick and dizzy and on one side only done.

The music, quiet for three hours, blares out again at five,
And five bars playing different tunes
remind you they're alive.
Bousoukis and latest pop and rock impose their beat,
Discordantly, insistently, on minds befuddled by sleep.

Evening is a social time, and young and old pour out
To shop, to see, to be seen, or simply walk about.
It's a calm time, a pleasant time, an interval in the play,
A time to choose somewhere to eat the best meal of the day.

And now, before the next act, I should really take the chance
To make some observations—act as chorus for our dance.
Greek islanders are noted for their hospitality
And visitors, of course, are charmed, but miss the irony,
That by their very numbers, they cause shortages of food
In a village where the soil is poor, and transport not so good.
And Lindos folk who still take pride in
 sharing with a stranger
Are now constrained to ration their tomatoes to a buyer.
For miracles with loaves and fishes is really rather rare—
I think the art was in decline before St Paul came there!

It's nine p.m. In Flora's bar Greek dancing has begun,
The men lined up together as they have always done,
Their grace and the ritual enthralling everyone.
But all too soon the tourists want to join the fun—
And girls who sway with confidence to music at a disco
Are clumsy at the strange steps and feel a bit like clowns now.
A line of stumbling dancers, incongruously,
End up doing a Conga to the music of Bousouki.

In such hectic pursuit of excitement and pleasure
The tourists seldom match their feet to the
Greeks' stately measure.
For them the dance will only end in the cool of Rodos airport
When tired kids and problems and the crazy
things they've bought
Make them realise that their holiday's come and gone,
And the temporary madness that was shared by everyone
Will fade with their sunburn though memories remain
Of blue skies and clear seas and no unwelcome rain.
In the sadness at leaving is a feeling almost corporate
As a wistful Northerner speaks for all: "Aw, it were great!"

Oh the feral cats of Lindos fall freely from my mind
And wait down in Lindos Square with others of their kind.
For the young men have gathered to see the new arrivals
And mark out their new game, by private signs, to rivals.
But hunters or hunted, filled with anticipation
Will find themselves a partner for the new dance just begun.









Greek Dance IV

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